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ALBERT L. GROLL.

*A Painter of Color-Harmonies.*

The pre-eminence of American landscape art is consequent to the individuality of the painters—or rather of those who are individual.

Art, landscape art in particular, reflects the temperament of the painter. All true artists show in their work a tincture, indicative of the accident of birth and environment, something distinctly reminiscent of the youthful days, when genius may be said to have been submerged. Where there is an over-accentuation of this individual temperament, as in Salvator Rosa, with his sombre moods and darkened soul, or in Morland or Teniers—typical men of low breeding—this is a distinctive blemish. None, however, fails to show in some degree either the prejudices and banalities of caste or occupation, not escaping from the vulgarities and ignorances common to the masses—the lisping half-refinements of the *bourgeoisie*, or fails to show the breathings, the tender longings of a poetic mind, which sees the first pale spark of twilight's gloom through earth's dull mist, while others note that day is gone.

In Albert Groll we recognize a man whose joyous nature, sometimes affected with darkening thoughts, still longs for the harmony of light and color and gladness, and revels in nature's tender smiles.

It need not be supposed because the early efforts of the student are often directed toward outdoor studies that landscape painting is simple. On the contrary, it is a most difficult kind of art production. It requires the hard combination of accurate drawing with picturesque effect. The lines of landscape are more complex than those used in the drawing of simple objects, and a skillful hand is necessary to compose and combine and unite varied details into a homogeneous whole. It is impossible for us, by any means at our command, to produce the brilliancy of real sunlight, to equal the whiteness of nature as seen in snow, in flowers, in clouds; suggestive hues or colors rather than exact imitations of nature must be used. The density of atmosphere affecting light in its strength and in its effect on color and outline, must be studied. Skilful, sympathetic hands are required to dissect the phenomena of nature, and with fine choice and graceful treatment bring forth those interesting effects which will challenge admiration.

It takes a master hand to accomplish this.

And when the painter goes to nature alone in all her glorious powers, to touch his imagination, exalt his feelings and cultivate his sense of beauty—then he becomes, with poet and musician, one of nature's high priests, initiated into her mysteries in his own peculiar way. Leaning on her breast he learns how sympathetic nature is with man's mental conditions. He tells us in color, as the poet in words, what nature taught him, and what we may have passed a hundred times, nor cared to see.

George Inness, Homer Martin, Wyant, Tryon and other masters have wrought with their creative skill those counterfeits of nature which are beauty's harbingers. To their minds the mountains dissolved into the air even as the waters are, everything disintegrates, until by the stroke of their brush the crystalline medium of the smoke and vapors of existence precipitate, so to speak, into the solidities of their canvas.

And their places are worthily taken by the younger men.

Of late we have seen some paintings which the artist calls "Harmonies in color," which form the quintessence of poetic expression. The name of the painter, Albert L. Groll, became known in wider circles only some eight years ago, but he has rapidly forged forward in recognition of merit. His "View of Sandy Hook" attracted considerable attention, his "Milky Way," a starry night scene of tender loveliness, was one of the prominent canvases in last year's Academy, and now we have a series of harmonies in silver, green, red, gold, which are like

motives of the tonescale, ravishing in their transporting cadence.

His art is the art of the true landscape painter, his paintings belong to the truest, noblest expressions of the guild, his works are commanding in their strength and beauty.

## THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN.

## AN ECHO OF THE EIGHTIETH EXHIBITION.

It must be said that the combining of the two Academy exhibitions—fall and spring—into a midwinter show demonstrates more and more the wisdom of this combination through the going years. A prominent reason for this is because much of what is shown bears yet the impress of the excellent summer work done by our painters in more or less intimate and sympathetic contact with nature. We are brought closer to the man who produced the painting than if it had remained on the easel more obscured for some months longer, to appear eventually with such finishing and generally not improving touches which might be given it in the studio, under impressions different from those which the subject originally conveyed.

If the average merit of the eightieth annual exhibition, just closed, is no higher than usual, it is still quite up to the standard of the Academy's usual displays. We saw bad work as well as good, but also some very good, and some really fine work.

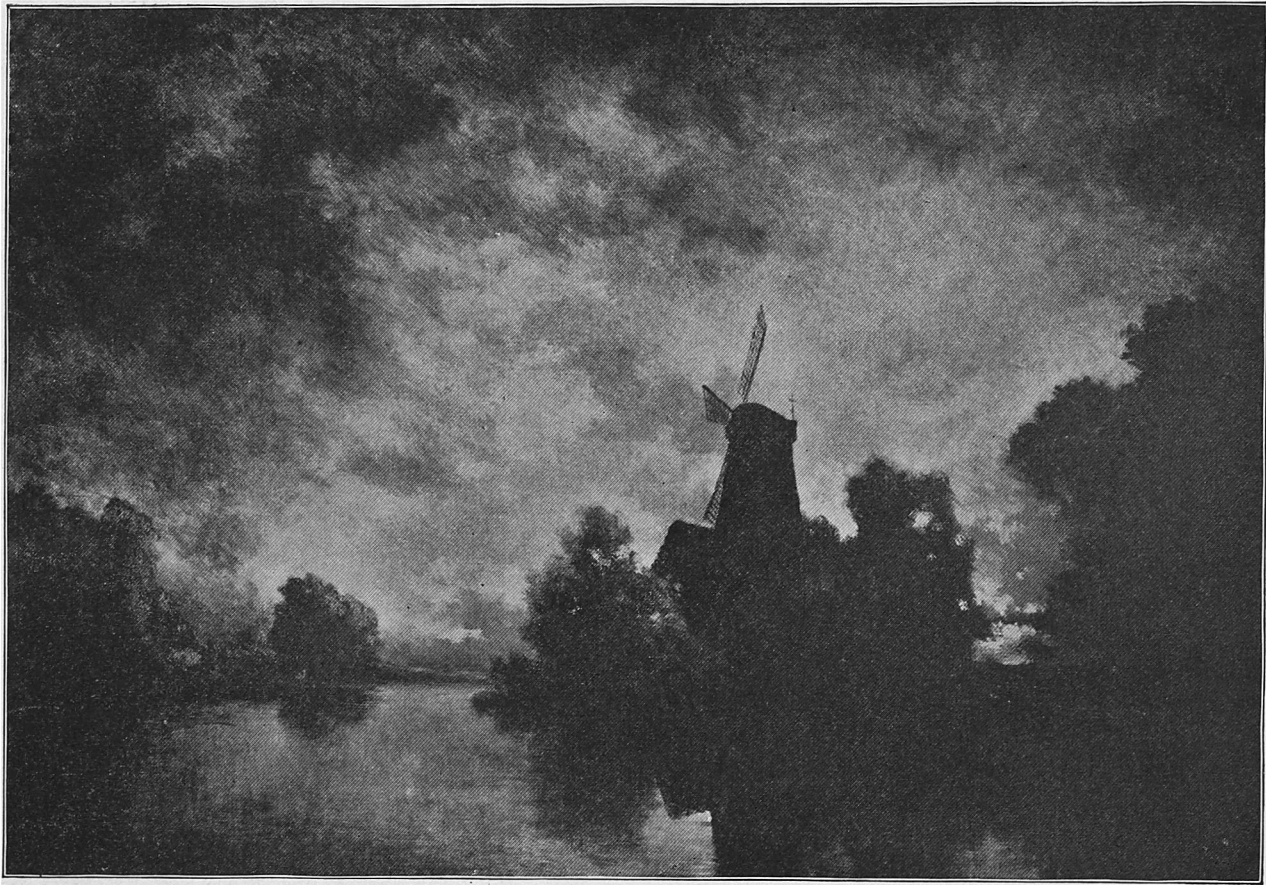
It is unnecessary to enumerate the works exhibited which were worthy of particular attention. The hanging was as good as it might have been, some excellent pictures going into the small rooms, taking away the suggestion of a "Chamber of Horrors," to which unworthy contributions of members used to be relegated. The Western men were a decided acquisition, while many of the younger men are coming to the fore. Of course, a very large number of paintings which were refused may safely be said to have been better than some of those hung—but that is the necessary consequence of the present jury system.

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Something occurred just before this last exhibition was opened to the public which makes a man smile, to be sure, but after all there is a souvenir of sadness in the smile. It is said that at the meeting of the jury to award the prizes, the vote on the Inness Gold Medal for the best landscape in the exhibition was a tie between Emil Carlsen's "Gallows Mountain," No. 348, and Edward Gay's "In the Southwind," No. 364. Mr. Gay received the medal. Mr. Gay is an estimable gentleman with high artistic development and eminently successful in the fruits of his palette. The painting to which the medal tablet was affixed is meritorious. And further, I will say that those who strongly assert that the magnificent sweep, the mighty breadth, the bold brushwork of Carlsen's mountain and skyscape is a better piece of painting, only voice their own individual judgment; but—Mr. Gay was a member of the jury which awarded the medal, and Mr. Carlsen was not. There must remain in the minds of the unbiased a lingering thought that this fact may have had something to do with the final decision of this tie vote. Forsooth, the members of the jury should be *Hors Concours*.

Why could the Academy of Design not adopt the Paris custom and let the members of the jury of admissions place themselves out of competition for prizes to be awarded? Much unpleasant comment, querying looks, suspicion of undue favoritism might be avoided. The plain H. C. printed on a little white ticket, and stuck to the frame, is a greater honor than the gilt tablet proclaiming a prize awarded.

But the manner of constituting the jury should be changed,



EVENING. ROBERT C. MINOR.

whereby service thereon might be regarded an equivalent to other honors relinquished.

As now practiced, the manner of assigning the members and associates to serve on the jury by rotation, in alphabetical order, is antiquated and grotesque. Many men are by temperament utterly unfitted to act in a judicial capacity. What caprices may not sway the facile opinion of an artist, what an opportunity to use one's power at the expense of better men. All the members of the Academy are not masters of the guild. *Nomen est odium*, but names by the score come to mind of men in whose judgment it would be preposterous to give the keeping of those that knock at the door of the exhibition for admittance. Involuntarily, the fable comes to mind of the dog in the manger, who did not eat oats, but declined to allow the horse to partake of them. Only the best painters, men whose fairness and broadmindedness are unquestioned, should be chosen at the annual meeting to serve for the next year. With some modifications, suitable to conditions, the method of selecting the Pittsburg jury might be adopted, and I would wager that the standard of the annual show would be raised simultaneously.

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Art is not all technique. Artists are the least reliable of advisers and authorities. What suits their fancy they praise without stint. What suits not they damn with a phrase and so pass it by, without reason or analysis to fortify their judgment. Prejudice is part of the impressionable artistic nature and it must crop out whenever the occasion offers an excuse. Again I say, only the best men should sit in judgment.

But this leads me to a thought which I casually suggested some years ago.

Could not the entire art jury system be improved by the addition of lay-members—in an advisory capacity, if you please, or with a vote in the board? There are some men who

through study, through collecting the best works of art, through constant contact with the art-atmosphere, have developed a critical acumen such as no artist possesses. One recalls the story of the introduction of the Impressionists, or rather the Luminarists, as they should be called. The worthy place this school fills in the art world was hewn for them by Durand-Ruel, a layman, and not by their admittance to art exhibitions. No new art-expression was ever given a showing except through the support of competent and enthusiastic art lovers. Juries of artists have always frowned on those who did not follow the beaten track, the old ruts, in which they were travelling. Whistler's experience with the Royal Academy is a case in point.

It were well if the progressive element in the National Academy of Design asserted itself and forced some changes to be made which would place the old institution in the van of progress—a position devoutly to be hoped for.

The Boston Museum acquisition of a Velasquez portrait has created considerable stir. Its authenticity has been vigorously assailed, and Dr. Denman W. Ross, who was responsible for its purchase, has had to hear and read some acrid criticisms of his action. Stung to defence, the museum authorities have called in a committee to pass judgment on this portrait, believed to represent Philip IV. of Spain. The experts called in to examine the painting and give opinions about it were Frank W. Benson, William M. Chase, I. M. Gauguier, Philip L. Hale, Charles Hopkinson, Francis Lathrop, Dodge Macknight, Herman Dudley Murphy, F. Mason Perkins, William Rapkin, Joseph Lindon Smith, Edmund C. Tarbell, Frederic P. Vinton and J. Alden Weir. These gentlemen declared themselves in favor of the genuineness of the work. It is said that John S. Sargent has opposed their view. Not having seen the painting I cannot take sides in the matter. The old pedigree game may have been played—a pedigree is often considered worthless by the knowing ones. The bulletin of the museum states authoritatively: "The committee on the museum believes the picture to be genuine and considers the museum fortunate in its possession. It has assigned the picture as a purchase from the fund bequeathed to the museum by the late Sarah Wyman Whitman."